

AVOCADO TOXICOSIS IN BIRDS AND OTHER FOODS TOXIC TO BIRDS—SELECTED ARTICLES

Critterology.com http://www.critterology.com/avocado_toxicosis_in_birds-79.html

By Dr. Susan Muller Esneault
Filed Under: Poisoning, Birds



Next time you are cutting up fruits and vegetables for your bird, make sure you hold the avocado. Did you know avocados are toxic to birds? Ingestion of the fruit, leaves, stems and seed of the avocado tree have been associated with toxicosis in birds as well as mammals. The causative agent, *persin*, is found in all parts of the avocado and will cause myocardial necrosis (death of the heart muscle cells) in birds. Budgerigars fed as little as 1 gram of avocado fruit developed agitation and feather pulling. When Budgerigars consumed around 9 grams of mashed fruit, death occurred within 48 hours.

Symptoms in affected birds include lethargy, difficulty breathing, lack of appetite. Affected birds may develop subcutaneous edema of the neck and pectoral regions. Sudden death can also occur.

There are no specific tests that will confirm an avocado toxicosis. Diagnosis is made on the basis of clinical signs and a history of exposure to avocados.

No antidote for the *persin* is available. Treatment for congestive heart failure may be of benefit.

References:

Kahn, Cynthia. Editor. *The Merck Veterinary Manual*. 9th Edition. p. 2361

Topics: poisons

Symptoms: difficulty breathing, lethargy, loss of appetite

From the Merck Vet. Manual

<https://www.merckvetmanual.com/toxicology/food-hazards/avocado>

Avocado

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- Food Hazards
- Avocado
- Bread Dough
- Chocolate
- Macadamia Nuts
- Raisins and Grapes
- Xylitol

Ingestion of avocado (*Persea americana*) has been associated with myocardial necrosis in mammals and birds and with sterile mastitis in lactating mammals. Cattle, goats, horses, mice, rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, sheep, budgerigars, canaries, cockatiels, ostriches, chickens, turkeys, and fish are susceptible. Caged birds appear more sensitive to the effects of avocado, while chickens and turkeys appear more resistant. Although an old case report exists of two dogs developing myocardial damage after avocado ingestion, dogs appear to be relatively resistant compared with other species.

Etiology:

Ingestion of fruit, leaves, stems, and seeds of avocado has been associated with toxicosis in animals; leaves are the most toxic part. The Guatemalan varieties of avocado have been most commonly associated with toxicosis.

. Budgerigars fed 1 g of avocado fruit developed agitation and feather pulling, while 8.7 g of mashed avocado fruit resulted in death within 48 hr. Myocardial injury, mastitis, and colic have been reported in horses ingesting avocado fruit and/or leaves.

From "Planned Parrothood: Avocado Toxicosis in Psittacines

<http://www.plannedparrothood.com/articles/avocados.html>

I teach exotic avian husbandry at the Cornell Veterinary College and talk about avocado toxicity in my course.

Avocados are definitely toxic to parrots. They contain a cardiac glycoside ("persin") that leads to rapid cardiac arrest and death. There are studies that show that some species, including African Greys and cockatiels, are very susceptible to the toxin. I'm sure there are other species that are also susceptible

Even though many animal species are sensitive to the toxin, people are not. In fact, avocados are quite nutritious and contain a good dose of "healthy" monosaturated fats. So, I do enjoy eating them..but am very careful to clean the kitchen area and utensils etc. so that my birds are not accidentally exposed.

I too have heard of parrots eating avocado with no ill effects. (In particular, Amazon parrots who frequent someone's backyard in Florida.) It is possible that some species are more resistant than others. If this was the case, there would be genetically based differences in metabolism of the toxin. This is possible and does explain differences in sensitivity to some toxins in animals and in people. Whether this is true for parrots and avocados is not certain. It is also possible that

some avocados or parts of avocados are more toxic than others. Toxicity may vary with ripeness or with the part of the avocado eaten. Perhaps in the wild, parrots learn from others which ones to eat - or what parts are safe. It is known that macaws in the wild learn what to eat from other macaws - they even eat clay which is believed to neutralize toxins found in the diet. Again, this is a possibility, but nobody knows for sure.

However, because avocados are so highly toxic to at least some species - and because there is no way to know this for a particular bird ahead of time- it is best to avoid feeding them.

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From Lafeber.com

<https://lafeber.com/pet-birds/avocado-fumes-cause-birds-death/#comment-21865>

The Spruce Pets

Ten foods that are poisonous to your bird:

<https://www.thesprucepets.com/common-foods-that-can-poison-bird-390628>